

JOHN & JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (WEST PARCEL),
BUILDING NO. 17
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5383-P

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PA
51-PHILA,
695P-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania '19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
JOHN AND JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (West Parcel), BUILDING 17
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Location:

4041-4055 Ridge Avenue
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

Present Owner:

Rouse Urban Housing, Inc.
1500 Walnut Street, 19th Floor
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

Present Occupant:

Mixed commercial and industrial tenants.

Significance:

Building 17 was built in 1894 to house the stables of the Dobsons' mill. It is significant as it is one of the few surviving buildings which serviced the mill complex and, as such, it documents the Dobsons' efforts to utilize the same architectural vocabulary of rubble, brick and timber for the smaller, utilitarian buildings on the site.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

Date(s) of Erection:

Most likely 1895, however the atlases are unclear. Expanded prior to 1919.

Architect:

Unknown.

Original/Subsequent Owners:

See Chain of Title.

Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

Unknown.

Original Plans/Construction:

On the 1873 Hexamer Survey, a building appears that is labeled as the stable. This building in later atlases is listed as Building 17. Building 17 is demolished to allow for the new construction of Building 17 (now Building 5) in 1880. The Hexamer surveys do not document a new Building 17 being constructed until post-1894, however, the 1884 Hopkins Atlas shows a structure in place at the present location of Building 17. A construction by this time would be probable given that the stables had been demolished circa 1880. It is also possible that the Hexamer Survey did not document the structure given its less important role in the functioning of the site. Building 17 is referred to as the stable but is has also been documented as the facility housing the water closets.

Alterations/Additions:

By 1895, the Hexamer Survey shows the stable with an addition to its northern facade. Again, by 1919, the building had been expanded with an addition infilling the "L" formed by the other wings. At this time, the building was divided into three sections referred to as Buildings 23,24 and 25. The openings in the building have all been infilled during the twentieth century.

B. Historical Context

Building 17 was most likely built circa 1880 at a time when the Dobsons' mill was rapidly expanding and in need of space for facilities to service the mill's workers and horses. The

demolition of the earlier stables for the construction of the four-story mill building attached to Building 4 necessitated the construction of a new stable. The image that the Dobsons wished to convey of their mills and the importance with which they viewed their buildings is evidenced in the use of similar building materials for this lesser structure.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

Architectural Character:

The architectural character of Building 17 is similar to other buildings on the site because of the use of rubblestone, brick segmentally arched windows and regularly spaced fenestration.

Condition of Fabric:

The masonry is in fair condition, having suffered from fire damage and erosion of the mortar joints. Areas with stucco are severely deteriorated.

B. Description of Exterior

Overall Dimensions:

First floor- 96.6' x 49.2'; second floor- 23' x 49.6'.

Foundations:

Rubblestone.

Walls:

Rubblestone. North elevation- composed in two sections, partially stuccoed, metal heating pipes run to Building 18 to the north, elevation terminates in terra-cotta coping on the shed roof and a flat fascia board with modern flashing on the gable end. East elevation- one-story elevation on an above ground basement, basement is partially obscured by recent infill, elevation terminates in a flat fascia board with modern flashing. South elevation - composed in two sections divided by a raised fire wall, metal heating pipes run to Building 5 to the south, elevation terminates with a flat fascia board with modern flashing on the gable end and a built-up wood cornice with modern flashing on the remainder. West elevation- composed in two sections, piers and parapet above the window bays are also of

rubble construction, parapet terminates in terra-cotta coping while the gable end terminates in a built-up wood cornice with modern flashing.

Structural System/Framing:

Rubble masonry bearing wall construction with heavy timber framing and steel joists that once carried a flooring system in the eastern section. One steel tie rod and plate are on the west end of the south elevation.

Porches/Stoops/Balconies/Bulkheads:

None.

Chimneys:

None.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

North elevation- modern double-leaf doors covered with plywood. East elevation- none. South elevation- central brick segmentally arched entrance now infilled with brick and rubble, second entrance also infilled with brick, modern entrance in one-story addition, covered over with plywood, garage entrance at northern end. West elevation- four original brick segmentally arched openings, all partially infilled, now with modern single leaf metal door, overhead garage door, and two modern double-hung aluminum windows covered by a metal grate; another modern entrance beneath steel headed lintel.

Windows/Shutters:

All windows regularly spaced with brick segmental arches, most are infilled with cinder block and stucco or covered with plywood, east and west elevations- four bays.

Roof:

There are three sections to Building 17's roof, two gable-roofed sections to the south and east and a third section which is shed roofed. The eastern section of the roof has a clerestory of frame construction with its fenestration infilled. The roof has suffered from water and fire damage.

C. Description of Interior

Floor Plans:

Rectangular interior space is divided into four sections divided by masonry bearing walls, southern room is a two-story space, western room is an office divided by modern partitions and eastern section is divided by steel joists which at one time carried floor decking, north section is under shed roof.

Stairways:

None.

Flooring:

Concrete.

Wall/Ceiling Finishes:

Walls are of plastered rubble and painted throughout and ceilings are exposed truss systems, both of which have suffered from fire damage.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

No surviving original or historic interior doors.

Windows:

All windows have been infilled. Infill is slightly recessed in unornamented plaster.

Decorative Features and Trim:

N/A.

Hardware:

Original hardware, which is no longer extant, is presumed to have been utilitarian in character.

Mechanical Equipment:

Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: See PA-5383-C for heating system, air conditioning is N/A, ventilation is by ceiling fans and fenestration.

Lighting: Modern and strip fluorescent, ceiling mounted, lighting.

Plumbing: Fire damaged, ceiling mounted fire suppression sprinkler system.

D. Site

General Setting/Orientation:

Building 17 sits between Buildings 18 and 5 on the northwestern portion of the west parcel of the site. Its primary elevation faces west. The building's location near the center of the complex but hidden from view is appropriate as it provided services for the entire site but was a smaller, utilitarian building. Infill has partially obscured the exposed basement on the east elevation.

Historic Landscape Design:

See Historic Context Section.

Outbuildings:

N/A.